However, all the works mentioned in the preceding paragraphs contain various linguistic data--generally limited to mediocre vocabularies--and a description of material culture, carefully undertaken in Rondonia. Nowhere do they treat of family life and social organization. Under these circumstances it may be surprising that the Nambikwara seem to have been completely forgotten after the publication of the work of Roquette Pinto. It was natural that our own expedition, begun exactly 26 years and two months after /3/ the beginning of Roquette Pinto's trip, should be dedicated to filling in--even partially--the gaps of preceding research. We have sought more extensive and precise linguistic information; paid more attention to the "dynamic" aspect of the material culture, considering less the finished products than the processes of their fabrication; and above all, we have dedicated ourselves mainly to the study of family and social organization, the description of which is the object of the present work.

It is superfluous to stress that an exhaustive study of the life and society of the Nambikwara will not be found here. We were only able to share the life of the Indians during the nomadic period, and that alone would be enough to limit the extent of our research. A trip undertaken during the sedentary period would no doubt furnish some important information, and would permit correcting the general perspective. We hope to be able to undertake this some day. As Roquette Pinto wrote at the beginning of Rondonia: "Lentas hão de ser sempre as construcções cientificas en tal terreno". ["Scientific building in such country must always be slow."] (1) His book, however, must always

1. Prefacio da Segunda Edição, p. 13.

be merited with having called attention to one of the most interesting cultures of indigenous Brazil and having been the first to produce a lively and charming picture of it.

The territory occupied by the Nambikwara Indians extends from the Papagaio River in the east to a zone in the northwest ending approximately at the junction of the Commemoração de Floriano and Barão de Melgaço Rivers, both branches of the Machado River or Gi-Parana. This point marks, at the same time, the end of the plateau which occupies nearly the entire central and western parts of the state of Mato Grosso. The southern boundary is placed at the middle course of the Guaporé River, and, farther to the west, it follows the entire course of the Commemoração de Floriano River. The location of the northern

boundary is unknown. The upper course of the Roosevelt River (formerly: da Duvida) is doubtless inhabited by Nambikwara groups, but these cannot extend far toward the west for the intervening region between the Roosevelt River and the upper Gi-Parana is occupied by tribes of the Tupi tongue. It seems probable to us that the northern frontier of the Nambikwara territories, between the Roosevelt and Juruena Rivers, approximately follows the eleventh parallel. Thus, the boundaries of the region could be delimited in the following way: in the east, between the eleventh and thirteenth parallels, the course of the Juruena and of the Papagaio; in the southeast, a conventional line going from the eleventh parallel and 58°4' to the fifteenth parallel and 60°, this last point corresponding almost to the location of the town of Villa-Bella; in the south, the course of the Guaporé beyond Villa-Bella to the sources of the Corumbiara River and the neighboring region, and, from there, the course of the /4/ Commemoracão de Floriano River to the beginning of the Machado River (about 12°7' parallel and 60°9'); in the west, a conventional line extending from the last point to the intersection of the Roosevelt River with the eleventh parallel; finally, in the north, the eleventh parallel from the Roosevelt River to the Juruena. Thus the greatest length of this area is about 400 to 450 kilometers from north to south and the width, from east to west, reaches 300 kilometers.

Considered in its entirety, the area constitutes the northern and western zone of the vast plateau which occupies the greatest part of the state of Mato Grosso, and whose southern extremity rises above the countryside of Cuiaba from the imposing site of a great rocky wall, the "Chapada." This northern and western zone is also the most inhospitable region of Mato Grosso; maybe even--with the pampas of the northeast--of all of Brazil.

The geological structure of these lands is imperfectly known. They are formed of red sandstone with clayey layers and date from various periods--Devonian in the east (the "Chapada" proper), Cretaceous in the zone which particularly interests us ("Planalto dos Parecis" and the so-called "Serra do Norte"). The layer of sandstone rises abruptly above the crystalline rocks which occupy the upper valley of the Cuiaba River. The transition is more progressive toward the eastern extremity of the plateau of the Parecis since, several kilometers to the west of Diamantino, one passes, almost without perceiving it, the

[33] dividing line of waters which separates the basin of the Paraguay, a tributary of the La Plata River, and the sources of the Ariños River, itself a tributary of the Amazon.

In its general aspect, the region is a sort of vast undulating plateau, falling slowly in the direction of the basin of the Amazon, with the highest points in the center and in the south (about 800 meters) and the lowest (about 350 meters) toward the north and west. Nevertheless, the traveler leaving from the south is greeted by an impressive spectacle when, after having traveled through 1,200 kilometers of high desolate land, he reaches the northwest border of the plateau, compared to the lowlands the difference in altitude is small, 100 meters at the most, but the rise is abrupt. Behind him, he leaves an interminable and sterile brush, while immediately at his feet begins, with the valley of the Gi-Parana, the no less interminable Amazon forest. This remarkable geographic frontier is also the western limit of Nambikwara territories.

Farther to the center and to the north, the aspect is different; running waters have worn ditches across the plateau which become larger in the direction of the Amazon basin. These depressions bring about differences in altitude up to 150 meters. One notices them especially in the region which extends from the Roosevelt River to the Doze de Otubro River, and they give this region a falsely mountainous aspect from which the fallacious expression "Serra do Norte" probably originates.

[34] [32] Geological constitution conspires with climatic conditions to [5] give the plateau its desolate physiognomy. The sand, product of the decomposition of the sandstone, provides a sterile soil, and the irregular distribution of rain explains the prairie-like aspect, so characteristic of the whole region. Except for a little rain—very rare—which falls sometimes in July or August, the "chuvas de caju," one might say that the period from April to September is completely arid. On the contrary, precipitation is violent and almost daily from October to March. There are storms when the rain lasts sometimes one, two or even three consecutive days. During the rainy season the temperature rises; 42 to 44 degrees[1] during the day, cooler at night, with a sudden and brief shower at dawn. But abrupt variations of temperature rather characterize the dry season, probably because of intense nocturnal radiation. It is not rare, at this season, to go from a daytime maximum of 40 degrees to a nocturnal minimum of 8 or 10 degrees. The Indians, who live completely nude, sleep on the ground, [29] [3/3] and know nothing of the use of coverings either of cloth or fur, suffer cruelly from this circumstance.

[1] [i.e. degrees Centigrade.— Rivalpt]

137 On such soil and in such a climate, vegetation is reduced to some sparse, stunted trees, some angular bushes where thorny plants predominate. Upon the arrival of the rains, the land becomes covered in an incredibly short time with flowers and tall grasses. But during the other seven months, these plants wither and dry up (when the brush fires of the Indians do not do away with them completely) and the sand, white, red or ocher according to the region, appears in large
136 tracts under the charred branches. This is the time when the rare
137 small game which wanders across the plateau concentrates in the impenetrable groves (capoes) whose rounded dome marks the presence of springs. There the animals find small pastures still green, usually bordering the narrow ribbon of forest which borders the rivers.

133 The courses of water are numerous and important, the two principal groups forming respectively the basins of the Juruena and of the Roosevelt. All the valleys are approximately parallel, and their waters flow toward the north. They cut the plateau by as many longitudinal ditches, and their course is cut up by cascades of rapids, sometimes also by waterfalls--for example, the falls of the Papagaio River at Utiarity, the falls of the Sacre River, and the rapids of the Juruena. These accidents correspond to the passage from sedimentary soil to crystalline rocks which reappear in the middle part of the Amazon basin. In their upper courses, owing to the nature of the terrain, the rivers have deep beds sometimes reaching a depth of some thirty meters. The water remains so transparent, however, that one can easily see the bottom and the fish which swim around. These conditions aggravate the food problem even more. The fish sees the fisherman through the crystal green and escapes him without fail. This is true especially concerning the branches of the Tapajoz. When one reaches the lowlands of the valley of the Madeira, one does not only go from prairie to humid forest, the water courses [6] are also transformed, with the beds flat and muddy, and the waters a reddish color.

131 One can see that the frontiers of the territory occupied by the
131 Nambikwara correspond--roughly in the south and north, and almost exactly in the northwest--to the limits of the plateau. Toward the east, where the border follows closely the course of the Juruena, the Nambikwara border the Parexi and the Iranje Indians who occupy the southern and eastern parts of the plateau.

161 It is impossible to estimate even approximately, the number of Nambikwara population since their territory remains to a large extent unknown. But it seems reasonable to assume that at the end of the construction of the telegraph line (around 1915-1920) this number must have been about five times more than at present. In postulating

1:Lévi-Strauss FP(A) E-5 (1938-1939) 1948 SP17 Nambicuara SP17

Map No. 1

Telegraph Line -----

[End Plate I]

137
133

271
142
432
415

484
482
415

1. Characteristic aspect of the savannah during the dry season. 2. A native garden in the middle of the gallery forest. 3. Travelling.

2: Lévi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939)1948
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

Nambicuara (Roquette-Pinto's *Uaintaçu*, which includes his *Kabishi*, *Tagnani*, *Tauitê*, *Tarutê*, and *Tashuitê*) between the Guaporé River Basin in the south and the Tenente Marqués, Iké and Roosevelt Rivers in the north and northwest; *Western Nambicuara* (new), closely related to the central and southern groups and living on the headwaters and in the upper basin of the Roosevelt River; and *Northern Nambicuara* (new), speaking its own language and living north of the central group.

The Indians mention other tribes north of the *Nambicuara;* one called *Saluma, Saruma,* or *Solondé* is almost certainly the *Mundurucú;* another may be the *Tapanyuma.*

In 1907, Rondón estimated the total *Nambicuara* population to be 20,000. In 1912 Roquette-Pinto met 1,000 to 1,500. It is doubtful whether the total population, which has been decimated by several recent epidemics, now greatly exceeds 1,500.

The *Nambicuara* language was previously thought to be isolated, but its distinctive trait—the use of classificatory suffixes dividing the universe into about ten categories—is strongly reminiscent of *Chibcha.*

Nambicuara culture, although less primitive than that of the *Sirionó* to the southwest, is strikingly simple in comparison with that of the neighboring *Paressí* to the southeast and of the *Tupi-Cawahíb* to the northwest. Their lack of the hammock, their custom of sleeping on the ground, their crude ceramics (the *Eastern Nambicuara* entirely lack pottery), the nakedness of both sexes, their nomadism, their use of temporary shelters during most of the year, the general poverty of their material culture, and the simplicity of their social organization distinguish them from the higher cultures of the Guaporé River area, to which they nevertheless probably belong.

CULTURE

SUBSISTENCE

The *Nambicuara* habitat is a savannalike plateau about 500 to 1,500 feet (150 to 500 m.) above sea level with an arenaceous soil which comes from disintegrated sandstone bedrock. Except for narrow gallery forests along river banks, the region is infertile, having only shrubs and small trees with thorns or thick bark.

In this unproductive environment the *Nambicuara* have a dual subsistence pattern. They are both seminomadic bush dwellers and incipient farmers. During the dry season, women, accompanied by their children, forage with digging sticks for wild fruits, seeds, and roots, and catch grubs, rats, bats, spiders, snakes, lizards, and other small creatures, while men hunt what large game they can find with bows and arrows and collect wild honey.

3: Lévi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

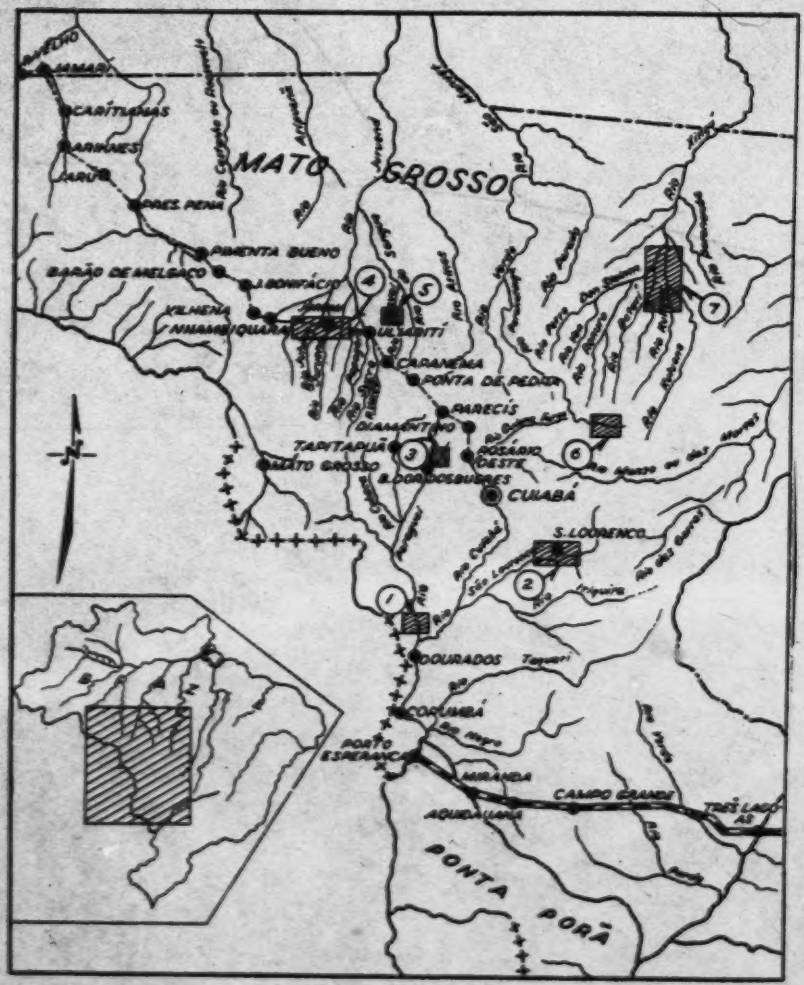
Gardening exists only during the rainy season and does not free the Nambikuara from wandering during the seven months of the dry season, looking for wild roots, fruits and seeds, small animals such as lizards, snakes, bats, spiders and grasshoppers and, generally speaking, anything which may prevent them from starving. As a matter of fact, their geographical surroundings, which are located in the northwestern part of the state of Mato Grosso and include the headwaters of the Tapajos, Rio Roosevelt and Rio Gi-Parana, consist of a desolated savanna with few vegetal resources and still less game.

Had I approached my subject from a point of view other than the one outlined above, I could not have avoided a long discussion in South American cultural history, aimed at clearing up this apparent primitiveness, on the question as to whether the survival of early conditions of life in South America is genuine or whether we should consider it as a more recent—although undoubtedly pre-columbian—result of culture clashes and processes of acculturation. Whatever the answer may be, it cannot substantially change our problem: whether tarriant or recessive, the Nambikuara society functions, in the present, as one of the simplest forms of human society to be conceived. We shall not seek information from the particular history which kept them in their exceptionally crude organization or brought them back to it. We shall only look at the experiment in social anthropology which they now enact under our very eyes.

This holds especially true in respect to their social and political life. For if we do not know what was the material culture of the Nambikuara forty years ago (they were discovered only in 1907), we do know that their numbers became tremendously reduced after their contact with white civilization. General (then Colonel) Candido Mariano da Silva Rondon, who discovered and studied them, first stated that their number was about 20,000. This was around 1915. I take this figure as greatly exaggerated, but even if reduced by one half, it considerably exceeds the present number which is hardly more than 2,000. Epidemics have taken care of the difference. What does this mean, from the point of view of our study? During the dry season, the Nambikuara live in nomadic bands, each one under the leadership of a chief, who, during the sedentary life of the rainy months, may be either a village chief or a person of position. General Rondon wrote that, at the time he was exploring the country, it was not rare to see bands averaging two or three hundred individuals. Now, sixty or seventy

4: Oberg E-5 (1949) 1953 SP17 Nambicuara SP17

131
133



MAP 1.—Northern Mato Grosso, Brazil, showing the location of tribes among whom field work was done. Numbered blanks refer to the following tribes or groups of tribes: 1, The Guató; 2, the Bororo; 3, the Umotina; 4, the Nambicuara 5, the Irantxe; 6, the Rantxé; 7, the Upper Xingú tribes.

4: Oberg E-5 (1949)1953
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR HABITAT

The telegraph line which runs from Cuiabá, the capital of Mato Grosso, to Porto Velho on the Madeira River has created a narrow corridor of the known through the vast unknown stretches of northwestern Mato Grosso. Along this line the Government has established telegraph stations manned by telegraph operators, many of whom are Paressí Indians. A makeshift road, over which trucks can travel, follows the line a few miles past Utiarity to Burity; beyond this the road is no more than a trail along which men ride on horseback and goods are transported by pack oxen. At Vilhena there is an army airfield.

Since 1912, when the line was completed, this corridor has been the highway of men who have sought rubber, diamonds, gold, and Indian souls. No permanent settlements of farmers or stockmen, as yet, occupy this vast hinterland. The rubber concessioner, usually a man from Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, or Cuiabá with sufficient funds to buy a truck or two, lays claim to a stretch of "galeria" forest, builds a camp along the road, hires a number of tappers, and goes into business. Each underpaid tapper works an area of trees, bringing his rubber to camp on his back or more rarely on oxback. Food must be brought in from Cuiabá, and as supplies, at best, are precarious, any delay in truck transportation brings scurvy and starvation. Eventually the workers drift away, some it is said dying on the way, and the operation ceases. During the last war the United States Government, through the Rubber Reserve, enabled rubber operations to expand. Good camps were established and the road improved. Today, however, the camps and the road are deteriorating, leaving the field to the shoe-string operator with his second-hand truck. The operations of the gold and diamond miners are still more uncertain. In small groups they enter the area, their scanty supplies carried on oxen and mules. Men unfamiliar with the semiarid wastes easily miss the areas where fodder and water can be obtained, the pack animals die and the stranded men are left to find their way out the best they can. At Utiarity I met a miner who was waiting for food supplies from Cuiabá. He had four oxen and two

[p. 82(B)]

had to cross a shallow river which meant unloading and reloading the cargo. In these parts, although bridges are built, they are not repaired so that there is always a period of several months during which the community has to get along without a bridge. The last truck which tried to cross on the ruined bridge nearby fell into the river and it was said a child was killed in the accident. Although having four or five thousand inhabitants, Rosario has no electric lights, no running water, and no public sewage system. I was interested in this quaint old town with its ancient Catholic church and public square, for it was from here that Von den Steinen, Max Schmidt, and many other anthropologists have headed northeast to the Xingú or northwest to Paresí and Nambicuara country.

We put up at a "pensão" or inn where we ate our evening meal of rice, beans, and dried meat topped off with "goiabada" (a kind of stiff, very sweet jam) and coffee. The inn was lighted by lamps common in the interior—a tin can filled with kerosene with a round wick sticking out through the top. Later everyone slung his own hammock from the hooks which stuck out all around the walls for this purpose. Our rest was far from peaceful, however, for other trucks kept coming in during the night, the truckers demanding food and lodging.

Next morning at dawn we were on the road and were soon winding up the steep escarpment to the top of the great sandstone plateau which divides the watersheds of the Amazon and the Paraguay Rivers. At noon, over an open fire, the two Brazilian women prepared a lunch of boiled rice and dried salt pork stewed in vinegar, onions, garlic, and tomato paste. At 6 o'clock we arrived at Parecis telegraph station where we put up for the night in an empty rubber storehouse. During the night the south wind began to blow, and the morning broke cold and drizzly.

After a small cup of coffee we climbed on top of the trucks, wrapped blankets around us, and pulled a tarpaulin over our legs. Although the temperature was not lower than 60° F., the exposure to the wind and drizzle caused considerable discomfort, particularly because the temperature of the preceding day had been around 90° F.

133 We were now well along on that part of the central plateau known as the Cerra dos Parecis.

132
134 The soil here is sandy and the rainfall insufficient
to support a forest. The vegetation consisted of
136 stunted piqui, mangabeira, fruta de lobo, lixeiro,
137 and other gnarled cerrado trees with the surface
sparcely covered with bunches of wiry grass and
other drought-resistant plants. During the whole
day we saw only four deer and two rheas, which
gives some idea of the poverty of the area. This
000 is public domain and apparently unwanted by
stockmen owing to its poor soil and lack of water.
By now we had left the telegraph line, which
crosses unbridged rivers, and were winding around
the headwaters of the streams. That night we
camped at Sucuruina where two palm-leaf-cov-
ered sheds, left by "tropeiros," provided some
shelter from the drizzling rain.

● 133 The following day the skies cleared and from the
137 tops of the folds in the plateau we obtained
magnificient views of the great plain. What few
312 trees could be seen were no more than 5 or 6 feet
high. A curious phenomena seen along the plateau
are the patches of forest of 5 to 10 acres in extent
which appear to grow straight out of the semi-
desert. Evidently ground water comes near the
surface in these spots, permitting the growth of a
genuine forest. Another interesting sight was the
birth of rivers. In the shallow valleys formed by
the folds, one could first see swampy ground, then
tall grass, then bushes, then short trees, and
finally the tall trees forming a "galeria" forest
which bordered a river winding its way northward
to form one of the headwaters of the Amazon
system.

At 4 o'clock we arrived at the Sacre River where
the trucks had to be ferried across on a raft.
As this operation took until dark we camped for
the night in some vacant buildings left by rubber
workers. Before leaving next morning we visited
the waterfall (Salto Bello) about 200 yards below
the ferry where the Sacre River tumbles over a
sheer drop of about 180 feet. Early in the after-
noon we reached the Papagaio River and after
ferrying the trucks across we were in Utiarity.
Both the Sacre and the Papagaio are deep clear
streams about 100 yards in width at the ferry
crossings. These headwater streams are evidently
fed by underground water, for their level does not
vary appreciably during the year.

000 Utiarity, which was to be our base camp for the
remainder of June and for July, is built on an

1 [on the Cerrado dos Parecis. - Analyst] [p. 83(B)]

headwater streams. The deep clear streams make fishing with timbó difficult. Game in the forests and on the plain is scarce. Yet by exploiting all the resources of the area the Nambicuara are able to survive. In contrast to the other tribes reported in this monograph the Nambicuara have the broadest resource base, as the list of their resources in Appendix 1 indicates.

The Eastern Nambicuara occupy the high plateau between Utiarity and Vilhena. At Utiarity the altitude is 442 meters and at Vilhena 665 meters. The dry season extends from May to September. Except for occasional south winds, which bring a cold drizzling rain for a day or two, the season is clear, cool, and dry, the daily temperatures ranging from 60° to 80° F. During this period the grass withers, the livestock of the white men having to subsist on shrubs and what fodder the owners can provide. Horses and mules, particularly, suffer during these months. In August the Indians burn the dry grass so that with the first showers new grass can grow out and attract the deer, which the Indians can then hunt.

The dry season, which the Nambicuara call *kwénkiru*, is the most difficult. By the end of June they have consumed the manioc, maize, beans, and other crops which they have planted. During July and August they subsist on palm nuts, combarú beans, fruta de lobo, snakes, insects, fish, and whatever animals they can kill on the plateau or in the forest. The rainy season (*wahíasu*) is divided into periods depending upon the fruits as they come into season. September is known as *yadédunsu*, for during this period the people depend upon the jaboticaba fruit. October and November are called *ya'awadjítsu*, for during these months the bacaba palm nut ripens. December and January are termed *dhru*, or piqui time. February and March are known as *casúru*, which appears to cover a variety of berries and small fruits. April and May are termed *daugadítsu*, as many fruits and nuts come into season, particularly, the cashew nut. During these months the garden crops also come in, giving the Nambicuara a short period of abundance.

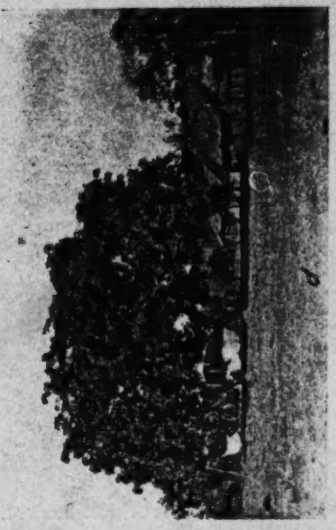
SETTLEMENTS AND SHELTERS

Each of the four Eastern Nambicuara bands has a defined area within which it hunts, fishes, collects, and grows its crops. These territories in-

4: Oberg E-5 (1949) 1953 SP17 Nambicuara SP17
Aueto SP6
YAruma SP25

YAN 133

Y [361 342]



A [561]

PLATE I.—General scenes in Northern Mato Grosso.—A, Utiarity Falls on the Papagaio River. A, Upper Xingú village of Caribou (air photograph by courtesy of Mr. Harry Wright). B, Jointed bark canoe and Camaiurá family on the Kuluene River. C, Large roped tree in Amazon County.

[p. 136 (D)]

6: Levi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939) 1943
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

THE SOCIAL USE OF KINSHIP TERMS AMONG BRAZILIAN INDIANS

By CLAUDE LEVI STRAUSS

121 607 THE kinship system of the Nambikuara Indians of the Western Matto Grosso is one of the most simple in Brazil. At the same time it is typical of a sociological pattern, cross cousin marriage, which according to our present information seems to have been very common throughout South America. The object of this article is to compare the familial organization of the Nambikuara with that of other tribes described in the older literature and to show that a certain kinship tie, the brother-in-law relationship, once possessed a meaning among many South American tribes far transcending a simple expression of relationship. This significance, still observable in Nambikuara culture, is both sexual and politico-social; and, owing to its complexity, the brother-in-law relationship may perhaps be regarded as an actual institution. Since the sixteenth century travellers and sociologists have failed to devote sufficient attention to the phenomenon, probably because it could readily be interpreted as a development of the imported Iberian *compadre* relationship. In our opinion, on the contrary, the brother-in-law relationship, together with its remarkable implications, constitutes an indigenous aboriginal institution based on the pattern of native culture. Nevertheless, it presents a striking example of convergence in which the native and Latin-Mediterranean institutions show numerous apparent similarities overlying important structural differences.

131 ● 133 The Nambikuara Indians are settled on the upper courses of the feeders of the Tapajoz River, between the eleventh and the fifteenth parallels. Their territory consists of a semi-desert savanna, which contrasts with the narrow gallery forests along the main waterways. The fertile soil of these forests allows [511] the natives to cultivate a few gardens in the rainy season, but during most of the year the Nambikuara subsist mainly by hunting and gathering wild food. 177 Compared to the majority of Brazilian tribes, their cultural level is low. As they were discovered only in 1907 and as they had practically no contact with white civilization between the year of the Rondon-Roosevelt Expedition in 1914 and the time of our own field work in 1938–39, their familial and social organization may be considered still intact.

601 The Nambikuara kinship system may be summarized as follows: All the father's brothers are classified together with the father and are called "father," and all the mother's sisters are classified with the mother and are called "mother." The father's sisters and the mother's brothers are classified together with the spouse's parents and the parents' parents in a single category which denotes simultaneously the cross aunts and cross uncles, the mother-in-law and father-in-law, and the grandparents. Passing to Ego's generation, the parallel cousins, both the children of the father's brothers and of the mother's sisters, are merged with siblings and are called "brother" and "sister," Turn-